

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 IGA-02 EB-11 AGR-20 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8469

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, BM

SUBJECT: IMPACT OF FLOODS ON BURMA'S RICE PRODUCTION

1. RECENT FLOODS IN CENTRAL BURMA CAUSED BY UNUSUALLY HEAVY MONSOON RAINS INUNDATED OVER 1.1 MILLION ACRES OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS INCLUDING AT LEAST 750,000 ACRES PLANTED WITH RICE. ABOUT 1.4 MILLION PERSONS WERE AFFECTED BY THE FLOODS WHICH DAMAGED SOME 270,000 HOMES IN TEN DIVISIONS. DAMAGE WAS PARTICULARLY HEAVY IN SOUTH CENTRAL BURMA (PROME TO NORTH OF RANGOON), IN THE IRRAWADDY DELTA AND IN THE TENASSERIM DIVISION.

2. OUR PRELIMINARY TENTATIVE ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT FLOODS ALONE WILL REDUCE THIS YEAR'S RICE PRODUCTION BY APPROXIMATELY 500,000 TONS. GUB ORIGINALLY TARGETED PRODUCTION AT 8.4 MILLION TONS ALTHOUGH THIS FIGURE WAS PROBABLY UNREALISTICALLY HIGH; 8 TO 8.2 MILLION TONS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN THE BEST GUB COULD HAVE HOPED FOR. THUS, FLOOD LOSSES MAY CUT TOTAL CROP TO ABOUT 7.5 MILLION TONS. INDEED, FIGURE COULD BE LOWER DEPENDING ON EXTENT OF POST-FLOOD INSECT DAMAGE TO REMAINING PADDY ACREAGE AS WELL AS THE POSSIBILITY OF MORE FLOODING FROM ADDITIONAL RAINS OR HIGHTXDES, THE LATTER DUE IN LAHWQSEPTEMBER. GUB PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE REPLANTING IN DAMAGED AREAS HINDERED BY LWAK OF SEED AND FERTILIZERS AND LOSSES OF DRAFT ANIMALS; IN ANY CASE, IT IS LATE IN THE MONSOON SEASON TO UNDERTAKE SUCH EFFORTS. IF ABOVE ESTIMATES PROVE CORRECT, TOTAL HARVEST SHOULD BE BARELY SUFFICIENT TO COVER DOMESTIC NEEDS; EXPORTS, IF ANY, WILL BE NOMINAL. IF ADDITIONAL DAMAGE

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OCCURS, PRODUCTION MAY NOT EVEN COVER 1975 DOMESTIC NEEDS.

3. CURRENT RICE STOCKS FOR DOMESTIC MARKET HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY
DIVERSION
TO FLOODED AREAS TO FEED DISPLACED RICE FARMERS WHO

NORMALLY LIVE FROM THEIR OWN SUPPLIES. GOOD QUALITY RICE IS NOW
AVAILABLE ONLY ON BLACK MARKET AT HIGH PRICE OF K 80 PER BASKET
AND SOME OBSERVERS PREDICT IT MAY RISE TO K 100 BEFORE HARVEST
BEGINS IN NOVEMBER. AS IN PAST YEARS, POPULAR DISTURBANCES OVER
RICE SHORTAGES MAY OCCUR IN NEXT TWO CRITICAL MONTHS IN THIS TOUCH
AND GO SUPPLY SITUATION, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF RECENT LABOR UNREST.
AFTER HARVEST STARTS, GUB MAY FACE CONFRONTATION WITH FARMERS OVER
RECENT GOVERNMENT DECREE THAT ALL PRODUCTION IS TO BE SOLD TO
TRADE CORPORATION 1. FARMERS WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT
TO MARKET PRODUCT THROUGH PRIVATE CHANNELS AS LONG AS GUB PRICE
REMAINS ARTIFICIALLY LOW.
OSBORN

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